

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1804

October 15, 2014

The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20229

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske:

I am writing to raise significant concerns about potential health and safety problems related to seafood importation. A recent report indicates that the European Union (EU) has rejected 24 container shipments of shrimp from India due to the presence of excessive antibiotics. I am extremely concerned that this Indian shrimp, as well as many other containers of shrimp rejected from our trading partners with more robust health and safety standards, will simply be dumped into our market. If we do not put in place adequate health and safety rules and sufficient inspections, this could pose a significant health risk to the American public.

The United States lags far behind the developed world with respect to health and safety regulations on imported shrimp. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) records indicate a variety of health problems with imported shrimp, including the presence of salmonella, banned veterinary chemicals, and antibiotics.^[1] Despite the serious health and safety risks associated with imported shrimp, the current U.S. inspection regime results in FDA assessment of only approximately two-percent of imported shrimp.^[2] More disturbing is the fact that U.S. health and safety standards for shrimp imports are *lower* than those imposed by other major export markets, including the EU, Japan and Canada.^[3] This is particularly problematic in instances where large volumes of shrimp are rejected from one market and may end up in another market with less vigilant inspections.

With shrimp already being illegally dumped into this country, the United States cannot afford to have this industry be more diluted, especially with potentially harmful product. I ask that you make this a top priority and allocate additional resources to inspecting seafood imports. I appreciate your attention to this issue, and look forward to hearing your plan of action to combat the introduction of potentially unhealthy shrimp into the United States.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,



Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator

^[1]See Food & Water Watch, *Import Alert: Government Fails Consumers, Falls Short on Seafood Inspections* (July 2007).

^[2]See U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Seafood Fraud: FDA Program Changes and Better Collaboration among Key Federal Agencies Could Improve Detection and Prevention*, GAO-09-258 (Feb. 2009), at 5.

^[3] The FAO reports shrimp is often redirected to the US from the EU due to lower tolerance levels for banned chemicals in Europe than the US. See UN Food and Agriculture Organization, *Global Study of Shrimp Fisheries*, FAO Fisheries Technical Paper 475 (Rome 2008), at 137, n.20.